

Message Text

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70

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 NIC-01 OMB-01 COA-02 EB-11

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R 151810Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4045

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT IC

SUBJECT: NEW INDEPENDENCE PARTY LEADERSHIP

1. INDEPENDENCE PARTY LEADER JOHANN HAFSTEIN ANNOUNCED OCT 12 THAT HE WAS RESIGNING AS PARTY CHAIRMAN BUT WOULD CONTINUE AS MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT. HAFSTEIN WAS AUTOMATICALLY SUCCEDED BY VICE CHAIRMAN GEIR HALLGRIMSSON. STATEMENT OF HALLGRIMSSON MADE IT CLEAR THAT THERE WILL BE NO CHANGES IN PARTY POLICY PARTICULARLY ON DEFENSE ISSUE.
2. HAFSTEIN TOLD AMBASSADOR IN CONFIDENCE EARLY LAST WEEK THAT HE WAS PLANNING TO RESIGN BECAUSE DOCTORS HAD TOLD HIM HE COULD NOT EXPECT TO RECOVER FULLY FOR SEVERAL MORE MONTHS FROM RECENT STROKE. WITH IMPORTANT MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS COMING NEXT SPRING, HE THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT PARTY NOT BE LED BY MAN WHO WAS NOT FULLY ACTIVE AND IN POOR HEALTH.
3. HALLGRIMSSON WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN TO EMBASSY. FOR AL INTENTS AND PURPOSES HE HAS BEEN ACTING AS CHAIRMAN FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. DURING THIS PERIOD HE HAS NOT DISPLAYED THE LEADERSHIP AND CHARISMA NEEDED TO GIVE THE PARTY EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IT BADLY NEEDS. LOCAL POLITICAL COMMENTATORS SAY

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ALSO THAT HE CAUSED HIMSELF CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL DAMAGE BY

SPEAKING OUT FOR ICELANDIC MODERATION IN "COD WAR" WHEN PUBLIC AROUSED OVER BRITISH FRIGATE ACTION. HE WILL REMAIN AS PARTY LEADER AT LEAST UNTIL NEXT GENERAL PARTY CONFERENCE TWO YEARS HENCE.

4. WHILE HALLGRIMSSON'S ELEVATION WAS AUTOMATIC, NEW VICE CHAIRMAN MUST NOW BE CHOSEN BY PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE PROBABLY MEETING IN NOVEMBER. THE RIVALRIES BETWEEN HALLGRIMSSON AND GUNNAR THORODSSON MAY COME OUT IN THE OPEN THEN AND PUT FURTHER SERIOUS STRAINS ON PARTY UNITY AND PUBLIC POSTURE.
IRVING

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